AIR FORCE DOCTRINE DOCUMENT 2-1.5

NUCLEAR OPERATIONS

DOCTRINE FOR NUCLEAR OPERATIONS

Despite the end of the cold war, the nuclear threat to the United States has not ended.

Much as the end of the cold war was unexpected, new threats could appear without warning.

Nuclear deterrence is not limited to the threat of attack against the United States. The development of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) weapons and their associated delivery systems, threatens US forces and interests around the world.

OUTLINE

CHAPTER ONE - Nuclear Operations

- Deterrence
- The Triad
- Theater-Range Weapons
- Air And Space Superiority
- Employment
- Weapon Effects
- War Termination
- Safety And Security Of Nuclear Weapons
- Alternate Technologies

OUTLINE

CHAPTER TWO - Command and Control of Nuclear Operations

- Authorization for Use of Nuclear Weapons
- Weapon System Safety Rules
- Communication Systems
- Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
- Air Force Organization for CONUS-Based Nuclear Operations

OUTLINE

CHAPTER THREE - Planning and Support Considerations

- Plans
- Timing and Deconfliction
- Logistics

OUTLINE

CHAPTER FOUR - Training

- Types of Training
- Levels of Training
- Exercises and Wargames

NUCLEAR OPERATIONS

Although nuclear forces are not the only factor in the deterrence equation, the fundamental purpose of America's nuclear arsenal is to deter an enemy's use of weapons of mass destruction.

There are three global delivery platforms for nuclear weapons: intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), bombers, and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

Air Force forces operating in a theater of operations may be called upon to use smaller-yield nuclear weapons. The Air Force may employ theater-range weapons using either long-range bombers or fighters designated as "dual-capable aircraft."

NUCLEAR OPERATIONS

Considerations for Employment

- **Countervalue vs Counterforce Targeting**
- **Law of Armed Conflict**
- **Launch-on-Attack vs Launch-on-Warning**

Whether working with CONUS-based strategic forces or conducting theater nuclear operations, commanders must ensure the safety and security of their weapons.

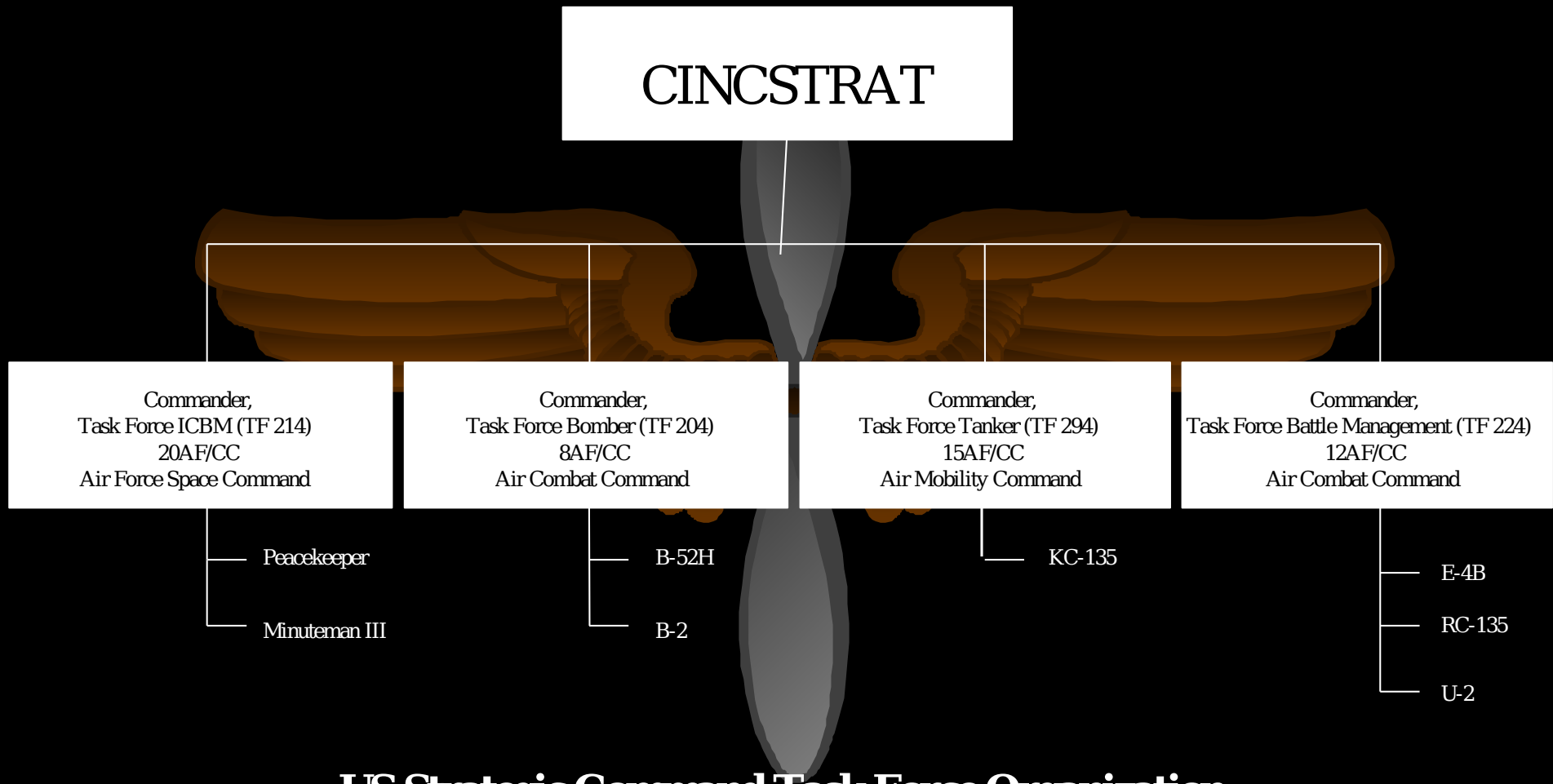
COMMAND & CONTROL

Effective command and control is critical for the proper employment of nuclear weapons.

The decision whether or not to use nuclear weapons will always be made by civilian leaders. The President of the United States, or the appropriate successor, is the only person with the authority to order their use.

Nuclear command and control must be guided by weapon system safety rules (WSSRs). These rules ensure that nuclear weapons are not detonated, intentionally or otherwise, unless authorized.

ORGANIZATION



US Strategic Command Task Force Organization For USAF Forces

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Plans for nuclear operations are prepared by USSTRATCOM and the geographic unified commands, in accordance with guidance provided by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the NCA.

Planning for theater-level nuclear operations should be integrated into the CINC's operational plans.

Large-scale nuclear employment is closely coordinated within the SIOP to combine targeting, mutual support, and defense, as well as national strategies and objectives. Air Force planners and USSTRATCOM liaison teams in a theater of operations must also ensure that weapons are deconflicted before being employed.

SUPPORT CONSIDERATIONS

Effective logistics support is critical for aerospace nuclear forces to be effective.

Security is an important concept in day-to-day support, as well as in dispersal and deployment operations.

Maintenance for nuclear weapons and their delivery systems requires specialized personnel.

Because nuclear systems and facilities are lucrative targets, air base personnel may encounter NBC weapons effects. US forces should be capable of responding to and executing operations in an NBC environment with minimal degradation of effectiveness.

TRAINING

Some Air Force members find themselves working only in nuclear operations, while others must be prepared to transition from conventional to nuclear missions. In either case, training requirements are very strict due to the sensitive nature and destructive potential of nuclear weapons.

Exercises and wargames are effective means of maintaining and honing the skills of commanders, planners, and combat forces. Exercises involve moving actual forces, while wargames, which are generally for the benefit of staffs, simulate the movement of forces.

Personnel working in nuclear operations must maintain the highest standards of competence, rather than simply meeting the minimum.

Summary

The role of nuclear weapons is, first and foremost, to deter an attack against the United States and its interests. Should deterrence fail, employment of these weapons may be required.

Command and Control is an essential component in the effective employment and deterrence value of nuclear weapons.

Nuclear operations require careful consideration. Plans must be developed in advance to provide alternatives to the NCA and should include preplanned options while also maintaining the flexibility to adapt to changing situations.

Training in normal and emergency weapon system procedures, as well as in combat operations, prepares crew members to react quickly to orders and changing situations.